

SCIENCE AND ART DEPARTMENT 1161

OF THE COMMITTEE OF COUNCIL ON EDUCATION, SOUTH KENSINGTON.

My Lord, (or Sir,)

In 1857, Mr. Sheepshanks handed over for the use of the public to be exhibited at Kensington numerous pictures which are now of the value of nearly a hundred thousand pounds. By this liberal act he desires to aid in forming a collection of pictures and other works which should fully represent British art, and be worthy of National support. Since that date Mrs. Ellison of Sudbrooke Holme has given a large collection of water colour paintings. Mr. Tite, M.P., Mr. Round, M.P., Mr. Roberson, Mr. C. Pearse, Mr. R. C. P. Clayton, Mr. Vaughan, Sir Walter Trevelyan, and many others, have also presented pictures. Promises of other pictures have also been made, and some few additions obtained by purchase

2. There are in the possession of the Trustees of the National Gallery numerous pictures of the British School; some obtained by purchase but most of them bequeathed by Mr. Vernon, Mr. Jacob Bell, Mr. W. M. Turner, R.A., and others.

3. In accordance with Mr. Sheepshanks' Deed of Gift, a selection of some pictures from his collection has been made to be circulated to Schools of Art, and so acceptable to the public has this circulation proved that the demands for loans are largely increasing and much exceed the means of meeting them.

4. As President of the Council and *ex officio* Trustee of the Sheepshanks' pictures, I feel that the time has arrived when the liberal intentions of Mr. Sheepshanks to aid in forming a Gallery of British Art ought to be fully carried out, and that a proper system should be established for giving effect to them; and I have to request that you will oblige Her Majesty's Government by acting on a Commission to inquire and report generally on the subject.

5. There appear to me to be several points which such an inquiry would naturally touch. The relations between a gallery of British Art, representing comprehensively British Art and a National Gallery representing the Art of all Countries, not indeed by works of every painter, but only by the best works of the best painters, seem to me to constitute a most important subject for investigation, and if it should appear that among Mr. Sheepshanks' pictures there are some of the best works of the most eminent British artists which it might be desirable should be placed in the National Gallery, I should feel it my duty to give attention to any suggestion of this nature. On the other hand, there are obviously works of British Art in possession of the Trustees of the National Gallery which it seems to me could find no place in a National Gallery of universal selected Art, but might properly belong to a Gallery of British Art. Again, after providing for the wants both for the National Gallery of Universal Art and a Gallery of British Art, there would remain many works not essential to either collection which might usefully be circulated to local institutions.

6. A further subject for inquiry is the system according to which works by modern British artists should be systematically obtained for the purpose of completing and keeping up the collections.

I am of opinion that much public advantage would be derived from a full investigation of the above and other incidental questions, and I shall be greatly obliged if you will afford me the benefit of your valuable advice and co-operation in dealing with them.

I have, etc.

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